

WE CLAIM:

1. A camera exchange system which includes a plurality of one-time use, digital cameras, each camera including an authentication means; and
at least one refurbishing station for refurbishing used, returned cameras by replenishing consumables of each of said returned cameras, the authentication means of each camera authenticating whether or not said at least one refurbishing station is authorised to effect refurbishing of said camera.
2. The system of claim 1 in which each camera retails at a price of X currency, each camera costing approximately Y currency units to manufacture, where Y is less than 0.5X.
3. The system of claim 2 which includes at least one collection depot where a user can return a used one of the cameras for a refund; and
a plurality of refurbishing stations operated by a manufacturer for receiving the used cameras from said at least one collection depot, each station being able to be authenticated by said used camera, to replenish the consumables of said used camera to enable a refurbished camera to be re-sold at X currency units, and the cost to said manufacturer to refurbish the camera being Z currency units.
4. The system of claim 3 in which the refund is approximately 0.25X.
5. The system of claim 3 in which Z is approximately 0.03X.
6. The system of claim 1 in which a selling price of either one of a new and a refurbished camera by the manufacturer is approximately 0.5X.
7. The system of claim 1 in which, for a return for refund rate of approximately 90% of the cameras, a total gross margin as a percentage of sales exceeding 75% is achieved.

8. The system of claim 1 in which a cost to the user of each photo processed by the camera is less than $0.05X$ if the user returns a used camera for refund.
9. A method of exchanging cameras which includes the steps of:
providing a plurality of one-time, use digital cameras, each camera containing consumables which are consumed by use of the camera;
receiving returned, used cameras to be refurbished by replenishment of the consumables to provide refurbished cameras; and
authenticating, via each of said returned cameras, that a refurbishing station at which said camera is refurbished is authorised to effect refurbishing of said camera.
10. The method of claim 9 which includes rendering a camera refurbished by an unauthorised refurbishing station inoperative.
11. The method of claim 10 which includes carrying out a test routine after refurbishing to determine if the refurbished camera is operative.
12. The method of claim 9 which includes
selling each camera at a retail price of approximately X currency units, each camera costing approximately Y currency units to manufacture where Y is less than $0.5X$;
refunding an amount for the return of a used camera; and
refurbishing each returned, used camera at a cost to a refurbisher of Z currency units.
13. The method of claim 12 which includes refunding an amount of approximately $0.25X$ for the return of a used camera.
14. The method of claim 12 in which Z is approximately $0.03X$.
15. The method of claim 12 which includes supplying refurbished cameras to a retailer at a cost of approximately $0.5X$ currency units.